

...until now, apparently.
In an interview published last Sat-
...review in ...

One go



Master of classics



For the fifth consecutive year, the **Bimal Roy Memorial Committee** takes film-lovers on a trip down memory lane with ***Smruti Sandhya 2001***.

Film-maker
Shyam Benegal
remembers the magic
that worked

ONE of the distinct memories I have of Bimal Roy is him watching the rough cut of Guru Dutt's *Kaagaz Ke Phool* at Dutt's bungalow in Pali Hill. Several other producers were also present. But while the film seemed to engross Roy, it seemed to embarrass the others present — to the point of restlessness. The screening was to have been followed by dinner and sarod recital by Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, but most of the guests chose to leave soon after the screening. Roy watched the entire film and stayed back for the dinner and recital. *Kaagaz Ke Phool*'s failure dealt a blow to Dutt's confidence and shattered him. At that time Roy was one of the sources of strength to Dutt. And now the film is a classic.

The very first work of Roy's that I saw was *Do Bigha Zameen*, when I was in school. It moved me greatly and so did *Sujata* and *Parineeta*. The finely scripted films stood out for

what they were and this was visible in *Madhumati* and *Bandhini*.

Roy was one of the many film-makers whose work inspired and moved me a great deal. He started off as a cameraman for P C Baruah, shooting his *Devdas* and then went on to capture the subsequent version of the classic made by K L Saigal. Roy's advent into the film industry was a fascinating journey because he was one of the few newcomers who arrived with a keen sense of aesthetics. At that time, a lot of people, who sought to make the industry their

home, came with the minds of technician. Amongst them it was Bimal Roy who invested in his work a great deal of aesthetic sense, which was not very common. This was one of the two qualities that marked him out from the rest, the other being his strong sense of social concern which he managed to bring into his work.

Cinema, being a public art, needs to appeal to the public at large — the market. In order to survive, you need to succeed. Roy managed all the three ingredients, which not only set his films apart but also provided him with commercial success. His films had aesthetic appeal, they touched the masses and they addressed social issues. And this stood him in very good stead.

The first International Film Festival in India, in 1952,

showcased works of the Italian neo-realist filmmakers like Vittorio deSica. An exposure to these films had its impact on Roy's works which were gentle and compassionate and which was also Roy in real life. In the very strong commercial atmosphere, his works stood out because of this quality.

A whole kind of Bimal Roy's school of film-making emerged later — film-makers like Hrishikesh Mukherjee, Mukul Dutt, Basu Bhattacharya, to some extent Basu Chatterjee followed more or less the same tradition of film-making.

With *Smriti Sandhya*, which is organised by Roy's daughter Rinkie Bhattacharya every year, the present generation is provided with an opportunity to see the classics made by Roy. Such a programme not only keeps his memory alive but also allows the younger generation to place Roy's works and the works of his co-artists in the perspective of Indian cinema.

(As told to Nilanjana Sengupta)



Flashback

Bimal Roy migrated to Bombay after 'New Theatres' in Calcutta closed.

Signed up to direct *Maa* — starring Leela Chitnis and Bharat Bhoshan — in 1952 for Bombay Talkies.

Worked on many stories by Sharat Chandra and

Ritwik Ghatak.

His first film as producer-director was *Do Bigha Zameen*, a remake of the Bengali *Rikshaw-walla* written by Salil Choudhury.

In 1958, he made *Madhumati*, which had

music by Salil Chowdhury. *Vaijyantimala* won the best actress award for playing the title role.

Sujata was made in 1959, for which Nutan won the best actress award.

Bandini was made in 1963. It was based on a popular Bengali novel by Jarasandha.

Bimal Roy cast Suchitra Sen, *Vaijyantimala* and Dilip Kumar in his most popular film *Devdas* in 1955.

Roy's *Kabuliwala*, produced in 1961, talks about an Arab wanderer from Kabul and his closeness towards a sweet little girl.

He won Best Film awards for *Do Bigha Zameen*, *Madhumati*, *Sujata* and *Bandini*.

He won awards for directing *Do Bigha Zameen* (1952), *Parineeta* (1953), *Biraj Bahoo* (1954), *Madhumati* (1958), *Sujata* (1959), *Parakh* (1960) and also for his last film *Bandini* (1963).